

Update from the Department of Early Learning May 2010

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

May 7 is National Child Care Provider Appreciation Day, a day each year to celebrate the hard work, creativity, patience and nurturing that providers offer to children in their care.

I know those of you who work with or have children in the care of providers appreciate them every day! And so do we at DEL. I've asked some of our staff to share their appreciation for child care providers who have touched their lives. See their thoughts starting on page 4. Also, Governor Chris Gregoire will be proclaiming May 7 as Child Care Provider Appreciation Day in Washington.



DEL licenses and monitors more than 7,500 child care providers around our state. These family home, center-based and school-age programs serve up to 179,000 children statewide! It's why we need to work closely with providers, parents and others to ensure safe, healthy, nurturing care that children and families can trust. DEL is launching what I call a "licensing reboot" this month. This is a simple but structured way for us to hear from licensed providers and families as we make decisions about licensed child care: What's working well? What can be improved? What gets in the way of offering quality care? Licensed child care is a partnership between us as the agency who licenses and monitors, providers who offer care, and families who need care. Only when all three entities are talking will we achieve what we all want: excellent care for kids.

The purpose of the "licensing reboot" is to build upon licensing regulations so that:

- DEL child care licensors and providers work well together, focused on quality care for children
- Our licensing work is transparent, consistent and supports affordable, accessible, and quality care.

The "reboot" includes several parts:

- Input from providers via surveys on issues including communication; licensing rules, policies and procedures; DEL/provider relationships; the future of child care licensing; and more
- Building better training, professional development and peer mentoring for DEL licensing staff
- Equipping our DEL licensing staff with technology and tools to support consistency and quality in the field
- Setting clear expectations and desired outcomes for DEL staff
- Ensuring more information about our licensing work is publicly available, including the internal policies and procedures that guide it
- Planning for how to measure, achieve and sustain success in child care licensing (as part of the statewide Early Learning Plan)
- Planning for how to ensure child care licensing is woven into Seeds to Success, our state's quality rating and improvement system

Licensed providers will be getting more information about this in the coming days via mail. I hope you will let your voice be heard in this important effort!

—Bette Hyde, Director

Register now for 2010 Starting Strong Institutes

The 2010 Starting Strong Institutes will focus on preschool to third grade (P-3) partnerships, alignment and education. After the highly successful August 2009 Starting Strong conference in SeaTac, the event is expanding to two events.

The conference will feature national P-3 experts and researchers, and will showcase promising P-3 practices from around our state.

Who should attend? Early care and education professionals, teachers, K-3 staff, K-12 administrators, policymakers, parents, local advocates and partners. Community teams are encouraged!

Clock hours, STARS, CDA and para competency credits available.

The institutes are sponsored by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the local educational service districts, with support from the Department of Early Learning's Head Start State Collaboration Office, The Boeing Company, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Thrive by Five Washington, United Ways of Washington, and the Foundation for Early Learning.

Register online for one of the institutes:

Yakima, Aug. 5 and 6

www.esd105.org/educational-services/early-learning

SeaTac, Aug. 9 and 10

www.psesd.org/startingstrong



Outreach period for draft Early Learning Plan extended to June 18

Read the draft plan, take the survey at www.del.wa.gov/plan

We want to be sure that everyone in our state who has an opinion on the draft Early Learning Plan is heard! The deadline for outreach on the draft plan has been extended until June 18. Here's what this means for you:

- You can go to www.del.wa.gov/plan to read the draft plan and take a survey to give your input on some key questions.
- You can host a meeting in your community. E-mail communications@del.wa.gov for a copy of the "Draft ELP Outreach Toolkit," which includes a PowerPoint presentation, a presenter's guide, a draft agenda and much more (in English or Spanish).
- Even if you've already read the draft plan, we will continue to add new information to www.del.wa.gov/plan. New strategies around child care licensing and subsidies are now available online for your review.

Let's work together to make sure the Early Learning Plan reflects the needs of children and families in our entire state.

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Birth to 3 plan moves forward

House Bill 2867, sponsored by Rep. Ruth Kagi, D-Lake Forest Park, calls on DEL to work with partners on a birth-to-3 plan that looks at various issues, including:

- Home visiting
- Quality incentives for infant/toddler child care subsidies
- Quality improvements for child care programs serving infants/toddlers
- Professional development
- Early literacy programs
- Family, friend and neighbor caregiver supports



The plan is due in December 2010. DEL is already hard at work moving forward infant/toddler quality efforts in our state, aligned with the draft Early Learning Plan! Here's some of what has happened:

- DEL, Thrive by Five Washington and the Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program convened an "Infant Toddler Think Tank" on December 17, which laid the groundwork for creating a more focused approach to initiatives that improve the quality of infant/toddler child care in Washington.
- Based on that conversation, DEL is planning how to redeploy infant/toddler funding to support quality.
- The draft Early Learning Plan includes strategies to ensure children (including those ages birth to 3) are ready and successful.

Check out the new Infant and Toddler system page on the DEL website to read the latest on this work:

www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/infant/

DEL, partners begin planning for child care subsidy eligibility change

House Bill 3141, signed into law by Governor Chris Gregoire, calls for a 12-month Working Connections Child Care subsidy authorization period for families with children enrolled in Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Head Start or Early Head Start. Currently, WCCC authorization periods for families vary based on several factors, and families have to reapply again when the authorization period is complete. This can sometimes lead to gaps in coverage, during which parents have to pull their children out of care.

DEL is working with the Department of Social and Health Services and stakeholders on this change. We are required to report to the Legislature on Sept. 1, 2011 with:

- An analysis of the impact of the 12-month authorization period on the stability of child care, program costs, and administrative savings
- Recommendations for expanding the application of the 12-month authorization period to additional populations of children in care.

As planning continues, updates on this work will be posted on DEL's website in our Government Relations section: www.del.wa.gov/government/legislature/

May 21—Early Learning Advisory Council Meeting

www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/

Thank you, child care providers! DEL appreciates you!

I would like to recognize Interlake Child Care and Learning Center in Seattle for the amazing job they did with my children when they were little. Now 17 and 20 years old, they both have fond memories of Interlake, and I believe became the caring and compassionate people they are in large part due to the nurturing and education they received at Interlake. An example of what they learned: When my son came home from his first day of kindergarten, I asked how it went. His reply was "It was good Mom, but some of the kids in my class don't know how to use their words." I told the teacher that she should have Mikey come teach the kids how to use their words instead of hitting each other!"

Elaine Larson

DEL Child Care Center Licensor



My appreciation is endless for my daughter's family home child care provider and for my son's after-school center child care staff. They embrace all the members of our family just as we are and welcome us every day with warmth and caring. Our family home provider's work will last my child a lifetime and comes from the strongest of early social attachment and brain development. Every day, my daughter stretches her ability to be a compassionate, skilled and successful woman: every time her child care provider snuggles with her to enjoy a book; every time they delight together in the magic of painting and markers and paper; in dancing and singing inside or racing around outside; splashing in water play tubs or learning to negotiate sharing a ball with her friends. Our daughter's provider is a nurturing, passionate professional and a jewel to the field of early learning.

My son's after-school program's dedication gives deep balance and breadth to his life, which includes the daily academic and social pressures of school and home time in a complex, diverse community. Every day, my son is nurtured to grow into a compassionate, confident and caring man: each time he constructs the next oversized Lincoln Log or Lego project, getting consensus on materials and space with his friends; each time he sits down to learn a new board game; each time he's gently nudged to read independently at the soft book area or given free rein on craft projects full of glue sticks, glitter and creativity; each time he can show his prowess on the monkey bars (to skip two at a time) or go on field trips to swim or hike.

Mary Ruch-Brown

DEL Family Home Child Care Licensor

We've been taking our two children to the same wonderful child care center since they were babies. It's like our second home. When our oldest child started kindergarten this year, we were very anxious about entering the world of school-age care. We didn't need to worry! I am in awe of the providers at his elementary school's after-school program, who harness the afternoon energy of children K-6 into art projects, outdoor play and music. School-age child care doesn't always get the "spotlight" in conversations about quality care for children, but it sure has my attention now!

Amy Blondin

DEL Communications Manager

My daughter Aleah is in the Turtle class at Kiddieland Children's Center in Lacey. All the staff at Kiddieland are nothing short of amazing! Her teacher has open lines of communication, and keeps me in the loop on how Aleah is doing. I know I can always call if I have a question or concern. Aleah goes to a place that she loves, where she feels valued and knows she is wanted – I couldn't ask for a better child care center!

Jennifer Stevens

DEL Help Desk Technician

We look at child care so often from the point of view of just the child and the provider. These are two very important components of the equation, don't get me wrong! But an equally important part of the equation is the parent. The partnership between provider and parent is critical to strong and healthy outcomes for the child.

My son, Nathan, was very medically fragile during his early years, so it was super hard to find, trust and leave him in someone else's care when the time came for me to return to work. Our best experiences were with Evergreen Vista Child Care from 1997 to 1999 during his preschool years. They offered wrap-around Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and child care in their preschool classroom. Their thoughtful approach to Nathan's extra needs brought calmness and reassurance to a situation that otherwise would have overwhelmed me. They helped me focus on building Nathan's strengths and capabilities rather than focusing on the "what-if's" and fear.

With Nathan needing extra care, it was sometimes a challenge for me to get out of the way and let him learn on his own. His medications made some tasks difficult for him, and I tended to just step in to close the gap. One day as I helped him put his shoes on—and growing frustrated with the venture and his resistance—the director walked by and said with a wink, "Did you know he does that on his own several times a day?" I looked at Nathan, who grinned up at me, so I gave him some space, and voila! On the shoes went! That's parent support in action. They were able to help me understand and maximize his strengths and capacity.

Professional development for Evergreen Vista's child care staff included parents, too. Not only were parents told about learning opportunities, but if a parent had a special area of knowledge to share, he or she could do so during the monthly meeting. I gave one of my first presentations on early childhood brain development after attending a local conference on Robin Karr-Morse's work. That conference impressed upon me the impact of trauma to a developing brain (such as through interrupted bonding and growth from multiple hospital stays) and the critical importance of the work that Evergreen Vista Child Care staff had done in helping both my son and me move through and past those experiences.

Child care providers do such important work nurturing and teaching our children. The work they do in partnership with parents—that child's first and most important teacher—is just as important! This is something that I know from first-hand experience and my professional work. And we know from DEL's 2008 Parent Needs Assessment that Washington's parents trust and want early learning information from their child care provider second only to the family's health care provider. Clearly, child care providers play an important role in each family's life they touch. So, here's to the work that parents and providers do together every day to help our children get ready for school and life!

Shannon Blood
DEL Family Policy Advisor

Less than a year ago, Carol Gibbs, Chrystal Thorpe, Wendy Avery and Michelle LaMarche started a new Eastside Child Care Association. This association is based on training and support of each other. The association has 56 members and had more than 75 providers attend their spring conference. It is growing every day because of the positive supports. These four providers help and support other providers by providing training, art and other curriculum ideas and ways to set up family child care home environments. These providers work very hard to make sure they have a positive impact on the children that attend not only their own child care but all the children that are in family child care homes on the Eastside!

Rita Person
DEL Family Home Child Care Licensor



**Do you have your own provider appreciation story to share in honor of
National Child Care Appreciation Day on May 7?
Visit DEL's Facebook page and share your appreciation!
Just go to www.del.wa.gov and click on the DEL Facebook link.**

Seeds to Success update

DEL and Thrive by Five Washington are working with the five field test communities as prepare to enter the second year of the field test of Seeds to Success, our state's quality rating and improvement system. Watch for updated information on the second year of the field test on www.del.wa.gov/seeds in the coming weeks.

We will continue to share “success stories” from the five field test communities, which include Spokane County, Clark County, Kitsap County, and the two Thrive demonstration communities of East Yakima and White Center.

Here's a story of how Seeds to Success coaches in Clark County are working with child care providers on interactions:

“This quarter, the coaches have started video taping the providers and spending time reflecting with them about their interactions with children. This has been an empowering process for the providers who have shared their reluctance at first but then their enlightenment as they get to ‘see’ themselves interacting with children.

One provider realized that she was ‘reacting instead of responding’ to the children and that she could ‘hear herself in the kids.’ She realized that her tone and inflection sounded reactive instead of responsive and engaging. Another center staff member has spent some time reflecting on her interactions with children and after videotaping herself with the children she realized that one child in particular was seeking her attention but not successfully getting it. Once she realized this, she was able to make time throughout the day to engage with this child and as a result he now has fewer behavior problems.

Through this process the providers were also able to connect with the parents in order to get their consent for the videotaping and most of the parents were okay with this component. It was a great way for providers to talk to parents about their experience with QRIS.”

